



New Norms for the 21st Century Soldier

Lieutenant General Michael A. Vane, U.S. Army

Because future armed conflict will remain in the realm of uncertainty, Army forces demand skills and expertise that, although present within the Army, are not specifically designed into the structure of operating forces or are not trained, tracked, or developed by the military (often these are civilian skills of reserve component personnel). The Army must develop a scheme for identifying and tracking the relevant skill sets that are resident in the Total Force so that it can apply this expertise to future demands.¹

—The Army Capstone Concept

The Army Capstone Concept

More than nine years of armed conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan have given the Army a multitude of lessons to assess and learn from. The era of persistent conflict has brought change across all military operations and training levels. Operational realities such as no frontlines or rear areas, an enemy in and among the population, and competition for popular support have forced us to learn many hard lessons.

Chief among them is the realization that specialized skills are essential for successful operations. The specialized skills required of soldiers today and in the future are articulated in this article as New Norms. They include operational adaptability, cultural and language proficiency, negotiation, digital literacy and space knowledge, weapons technical intelligence, and site exploitation. These specialized skills must now become universal tasks as soldiers continue to face the demands of the current fight.

Leader Development Strategy

The genesis for the discussion of New Norms is the Army Leader Development Strategy, which builds on the Army's experiences after the end of the Cold War and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.² It assumes that the future operational environment will be even more uncertain, complex, and competitive than today's is, as hybrid threats challenge the Army across the full spectrum of operations.

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PHOTO: An Afghan child offers a flower to U.S. Army SGT John M. Davis, near Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan, 14 April 2011. (U.S. Army, SPC Edward A. Garibay)

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The outcome of a campaign of learning over the past ten years, the Army Leader Development Strategy responds to these challenges and demands. It seeks to develop agile, adaptive, and innovative Army leaders. Leaders at all levels must appreciate the complexity of the dynamic security environment in which they operate. They need to have or gain knowledge and understanding of geopolitics, culture, and language. They must act on opportunities within the scope of their units' collective knowledge and capability.

The strategy also identifies and develops leaders with expertise in financial management, program management, acquisition, education, strategic planning, and force development. Implementation of the strategy recognizes the necessary balance between leadership and technical expertise within leaders, critical to how we address the responsibilities given to us under Title 10 of the U. S. Code.

Operational Adaptability

The Army Capstone Concept, The Army Operating Concept, and Field Manual (FM) 3-24, Counterinsurgency, reference soldier specialized skills and the

importance of culture, language, and technology for soldiers today.³ The central idea of *The Army Capstone Concept* is operational adaptability—being comfortable with ambiguity and decentralization and being willing to accept risk and make rapid adjustments based on a continuous assessment of the situation. This is essential to developing situational understanding and seizing and exploiting the initiative.⁴

Operational adaptability requires a mastery of operational art and the ability to link the tactical employment of forces to policy goals and strategic objectives. It requires proficient forces that understand how to combine Joint, Army, interagency, and multinational capabilities to assist friends; protect and reassure indigenous populations; and identify, isolate, and defeat enemies.

Operational adaptability requires cohesive teams and resilient soldiers who are capable of overcoming the enduring psychological and moral challenges of combat.⁵ It also requires, before we enter combat, in-depth understanding of how we generate units and capabilities under the Title 10 authorities and responsibilities.



U.S. Air Force, SGT Brian Ferguson)

U.S. soldiers talk with a land owner about irrigation, Zabul province, Afghanistan, 19 January 2011.

Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy

Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and the Army's transition from Operation Iraqi Freedom to Operation New Dawn in Iraq have put great demands on soldier knowledge in culture and foreign languages. Arguably, Arabic and Afghan cultural awareness and basic language proficiency in Arabic, Dari, or Pashto have become skill sets required of the post-9/11 Army. There is also the potential for Farsi, Chinese, or another language to come to the forefront in future military engagements. Cultural study guides and language instructional pamphlets have joined operations, logistics, intelligence, and technical field manuals on our bookshelves. These interpersonal "soft skills" have never been as important as they are today because of the key role that human terrain plays in a counterinsurgency and other operations across the globe.

The Army designed its Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy to remove gaps in its capability to influence different cultures and operate effectively within them. Battlefield lessons learned have demonstrated that language proficiency and cultural understanding are vital enablers for full spectrum operations.

Initial Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom lessons learned indicated that soldiers and their leaders had a limited understanding of how cultural considerations influence the planning, execution, and outcomes of military operations. In addition, insufficient foreign language capability across the Army limited unit, individual leader, and soldier effectiveness. Lessons learned also revealed that the Army did not have a bench of future leaders with cultural and foreign language capabilities. This shortfall reduces the Army's overall effectiveness in meeting the needs of the geographic combatant commanders.

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To be successful in full spectrum operations, soldiers must have foreign language skills and cultural comprehension. Existing education and training programs and other initiatives are helping to meet this need, particularly for specialists, but they do not meet the Army's broader requirements. To close the gaps in cultural understanding and foreign language skills, we must build unit capability and expand the scope of leader development. Increased scope, emphasis, and rigor are required in culture and foreign language training to support a unit's training for its mission essential tasks during the Army Force Generation process leading to deployment for partnership building or combat missions. We must revise leader development programs to produce Army leaders who understand how cultural comprehension and foreign language capabilities affect task accomplishment. Consequently, the Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy is guided by and directly supports the Army Leader Development Strategy.

The Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy is a holistic strategy for cultural and foreign language education and training to close capability gaps. It links leaders' and soldiers' knowledge, skills, and abilities to unit capability to enable the execution of missions and tasks. The end state is an Army with the right blend of culture awareness and foreign language expertise to facilitate full spectrum operations among other cultures. (Follow-on work is necessary to account for the career development of civilians through integrating a culture and foreign language strategy within the Civilian Education System.)

Cultural Awareness

Traditionally, the study of foreign cultures has been the domain of anthropologists, foreign area officers, and Special Forces. Culture is an integrated system of socially acquired values, beliefs, and rules of conduct governing the range of accepted behaviors in any given society. Cultural differences distinguish societies from one another. Cultural awareness implies being aware of cultural norms, behaviors, and rules of conduct at the level of realization or knowledge. FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, emphasize its importance.⁶

Cultural awareness has become an especially important competency for small-unit leaders. Perceptive junior leaders learn how cultures affect military



(U.S. Army)

Female soldiers assigned to a U.S. Special Operations Cultural Support Team speak with members of the women's shura held at a local compound in Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan, 4 May 2010.

operations. They study major world cultures and put a priority on learning the details of the new operational environment when deployed. Different solutions are required in each different cultural context. Effective small-unit leaders adapt to new situations, realizing their words and actions may be interpreted differently in different cultures. Cultural awareness requires self-awareness, self-directed learning, and adaptability.⁷

Knowing foreign cultures requires understanding of what people and societies value or love. All soldiers and leaders must be able to look at situations through another culture's lenses. For example, in Muslim countries cultural awareness includes knowing not to give someone money or pass food with the left hand. Soldiers should strive to comprehend the dynamics of more complex cultural situations.

The Army may benefit a great deal by expanding assignments, training, and education of its foreign area officers. These officers can be effective in bridging the divide between cultures to meet America's national interests or theater strategy abroad. Foreign area offices could better support the Army at war through more effective assignment of its regional

specialists in theater, by more closely blending their skills and education (e.g., The Defense Strategy Course) with that of those who work as strategists (Functional Area 59), and by tying strategy to regional partner-building activities. Affording foreign area officers more career incentives and promotion pathways will help build a bench of experienced leaders to tackle the toughest challenges in the future.⁸

Negotiation

The empowered, enabled leader's responsibilities increase in a decentralized environment.⁹ Military operations in both Afghanistan and Iraq have tactical importance, operational significance, and strategic implications in the daily life of soldiers as they attempt to secure neighborhoods, strengthen political institutions, acquire information and intelligence, and gain cooperation. Negotiating is a critical warfighting skill. Our negotiation skills influence the Army's ability to meet strategic goals and accomplish missions efficiently and effectively.¹⁰

Strategic leaders often rely on negotiation to obtain cooperation and support to accomplish a

mission. Commanders who ordinarily only issue orders now negotiate plans and actions with agency partners, partner nations, and nongovernmental agencies. In the spirit of cooperation and to get things done, commanders sometimes have to interpret all requirements to the satisfaction of one or more partners.¹¹

Successful negotiating requires a wide range of interpersonal skills. To resolve conflicting views, strategic leaders must visualize several end states, while maintaining a clear idea of the best one. They use tact to justify standing firm on nonnegotiable points while simultaneously communicating respect for other participants.¹²

A successful negotiator must exercise good judgment and be mentally agile and skilled in active listening. Negotiators must be able to diagnose unspoken agendas and detach themselves from the negotiation process. Successful negotiating also involves communicating a clear position on all issues while conveying a willingness to bargain on negotiable ones. This entails recognizing what is acceptable to all parties and working towards a common goal.¹³

Digital Literacy

The New Norm of digital literacy reflects the technological advances that help soldiers access, acquire, process, and move information on the modern battlefield. Most soldiers entering the Army today acquired many of their basic digital literacy skills while growing up. Some skills, such as establishing a local area network or using digital communications devices, came with specific military occupational specialties in the past. Now, due to their common use by the public, these skills are becoming “universal tasks.”

Army Digital Literacy (D-Lit) is individual awareness of attitudes toward and abilities to appropriately use digital tools to accomplish Army missions and personal and professional development.¹⁴ The four D-Lit competency levels are—

- Baseline.
- Functional.
- Advanced.
- Expert.

Baseline. All soldiers and DA civilians must be competent, responsible users of digital technology who can communicate, locate, transform, and share

information through digital devices and services to meet their mission or job requirements. Assuring that every soldier and DA civilian has baseline digital competencies maximizes the intersection of teachable moments with point-of-need training and learning content delivered digitally anytime, anywhere.

Functional. Operators and managers must possess specific knowledge, skills, and abilities to use, manage, assess, and understand digital technologies and apply them to meet the Army mission in real-world situations. They must also sustain baseline D-Lit competencies.

Advanced. Knowledge managers, system administrators, bandwidth monitors, and technical professionals down to the help desk are responsible for implementing, developing, and maintaining digital technologies and applications to meet Army missions in real-world situations. They must achieve this competency level and sustain baseline and functional D-Lit competencies.

Expert. Highest-capability users, such as managers, developers, and technical engineers, have the training, expertise, and experience needed to



(U.S. Army)

PFC Stephanie Robinson, Unit Supply Specialist Course student, Quartermaster School, explores the apps loaded to an iPhone issued to her at the start of her course.

control risks and to optimize opportunities for digital technology to meet Army missions in real world, simulated, and forecast circumstances. They must meet the requirements for expert and sustain all three lower D-Lit competencies. Establishing a baseline for digital literacy is critical to TRADOC as it implements Army Learning Concept 2015.

These capabilities will be increasingly evident in young soldiers and DA civilians new to the Army as U.S. schools emphasize digital literacy. The Army may assess these capabilities during accession, but the requirement to make soldiers and civilian employees capable and “Army ready” will continue to be an early-career training necessity. Individuals advancing through their careers will become more digitally literate at points of need, either required or voluntary.

In a basic sense, digital literacy is the ability to navigate basic online functions such as email or to simply possess a minimum level of technology knowledge. It is also the ability to use new tools such as smart phones and social media to full advantage and to understand information and communication technology so that one has the ability to find information, on demand, using any viable online means to do so, without hesitation.

The use of smart phones and iPad-like devices in the civilian sector highlights the potential of smart phone technologies and digital applications for the military. This includes administrative actions, training, and battlefield tactical functions. That’s why the Army Capabilities Integration Center and the Army’s chief information officer initiated a series of pilot programs under an umbrella term, “Connecting Soldiers to Digital Applications.”

The Army is exploring how best to exploit small, lightweight, and affordable phones in tactical operations. The Army Evaluation Task Force evaluated both military-developed and commercially developed tactical applications for position location and identification reporting, calls for fire, MEDEVAC requests, and other situational awareness and mission command task features.

Other battlefield applications under operational concept review include—

- **Threat Act Program.** This program enables soldiers who have left a forward operating base to continuously search and update information data repositories on enemy activity in their area of operations.
- **Soldier Eyes.** This program uses phone sensors for situational awareness on location. It links



(U.S. Army)

Since the Army launched its MilGaming portal in February 2011, more than 12,000 people have logged some 10,000 hours downloading game software such as Virtual BattleSpace and sharing user-created scenarios and videos.

into data repositories to identify key locations and provide directions and distance to enable appropriate movement.

- New Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) Feeds. This capability provides a day or night live video feed from a camera, mounted on a vehicle, to a unit's headquarters, thus allowing the unit's leaders to see what their soldiers see on the ground.

- "Media Share." This application allows soldiers to submit photos or video to their higher headquarters and helps in the collection and analysis of intelligence.

- Future Connecting Soldiers to Digital Applications Program efforts. These may include a gateway project and base stations to integrate smart phones with tactical radio networks and mission command systems. Other devices, such as pads, tablets, and other hand-held mobile devices, may assist soldiers in field and in garrison with planning, operations, education, and training. The pace of change in mobile networking is accelerating, and the Army needs to stay connected to these opportunities.

Reliance on digital and cyber media continues to grow as modern armies move to keep up with new information technologies. The 1 October 2010 creation of Cyber Command reflects this. It is an Army organization that plans, coordinates, and integrates network operations to defend all Army networks to ensure that the Army retains freedom of action in cyberspace.¹⁵ The Army must leverage the capabilities of cyber travelling through the electromagnetic spectrum and control it to support freedom of maneuver and degrade our enemy. The real potential for cyber attacks at all echelons and the cyber electromagnetic operational uncertainty ahead identify "cyber skills" as a potential New Norm, requiring training and education in the future.

Space Knowledge

The Army has evolved from a space-enabled force to a fully space-dependent Army in which effective execution of full spectrum operations depends on soldiers at all levels understanding, leveraging, and employing capabilities—space-based systems such as line-of-sight satellite communications, GPS-provided navigation, precision engagement, and timing protocols; terrestrial and atmospheric

Space knowledge, as a New Norm, must include the ability to harness the power of space-enabled capabilities...

monitoring for operational environment awareness; missile warning; and multi-discipline intelligence. Space equipment and materiel have provided "normalized" capabilities to the force for decades, but many leaders and soldiers do not know how to integrate the capabilities effectively or to plan for disruptions to operations.

Space knowledge involves more than just knowing that space systems provide capabilities. It includes understanding operational parameters, risks, and constraints, such as the effect of the sun and terrestrial environment on systems, and having the ability to recognize and mitigate denial, disruption, or interference with space-enabled capabilities.

Today's leaders cannot go to war or into an operational environment without satellite communications, GPS, space-based ISR, environmental monitoring, and missile warning. They should understand the planning, integration, and coordination necessary to fully access and integrate all available space capabilities and effects. The Army must incorporate space education and knowledge across the learning continuum, stressing the implications of degraded space capabilities and emphasizing mitigation techniques through rigorous training scenarios.

Space is no longer the exclusive domain of the U.S. military. It has now become a contested environment. Space knowledge, as a New Norm, must include the ability to harness the power of space-enabled capabilities and mitigate their denial and disruption.

Weapons Technical Intelligence

Weapons technical intelligence, as a New Norm, stems from the technical and forensic collection and exploitation of captured materials that enable analysts to conduct trend, pattern, and link analysis. The intelligence products derived from the weapons technical intelligence process directly support force

protection, planning, targeting, material identification and sourcing, and even criminal prosecution. Acquiring evidence assists law enforcement in a sovereign country to find the responsible culprits of crimes so that they can prosecute them under the country's laws. This helps deter future criminal actions through effective law enforcement and strengthens the host or partner nation through application of the rule of law, a key component of democratic governance. Commanders benefit from weapons technical intelligence throughout full spectrum operations in which the enemy uses asymmetric means as their principal method of invasion and attack.¹⁶

Weapons intelligence teams are small tactical teams that provide support to Army brigade combat teams and Marine Corps regimental combat teams. They provide commanders on the battlefield with a dedicated, counter-improvised explosive device-focused, tactical collection and exploitation capability in support of targeting.

Commanders may employ the teams during raids, in a cordon and search, at attack sites (post-blast IED, sniper incidents, etc.), or at locations where weapons

are discovered (pre-blast IED detected and rendered safe, cache sites, bomb-making facilities, and others).

Site Exploitation

Site exploitation is another scientifically and technically oriented New Norm. It consists of search techniques and collection methods to preserve documents, material, and tactical questioning results. This enables rapid exploitation of information gained from the site to facilitate follow-on actions to attack the network. Site exploitation requires an awareness of the local culture to exploit collected information and material fully.

Information at a site may take a variety of forms. It encompasses all potential sources of information, and is defined as facts, data, or instructions in any medium or form. The medium can include documents, computers, recordings, human sources, and materials such as weapons, ammunition, equipment, chemicals, and supplies. Site exploitation is an enabler to processes, such as weapons technical intelligence, that provide the joint commander and small units the ability to exert and maintain constant pressure on the enemy network.



(Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization)

Soldiers examine evidence at an IED training site at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, CA, .

Summary and Conclusion

New Norms stress the value of soldier operational adaptability and knowledge of foreign cultures and language, negotiation, digital literacy and space knowledge, weapons technical intelligence, and site exploitation. These New Norms emerged from tough lessons learned in current operations, as well as from insights gained during concept and capability development.

The U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command is working to accelerate the process of institutionalizing these skills through training and by enhancing programs of instruction at Army schoolhouses. We must continue to standardize individual tasks at home

station, military schools, and the combat training centers to eliminate varying competency levels from school to school.

As the Army continues to adapt, additional New Norms will surely emerge, thereby adding to the demands put on the education and training infrastructure. Arguably, under certain battlefield conditions, these New Norms are as important as conducting physical fitness and maintaining soldier marksmanship and proficiency in warrior tasks and small unit battle drills. New Norms are yet another reflection of how the Army is working to adapt to the changing nature of conflict in the post 9/11 era and to the changing face of emerging technology. **MR**

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